

## **Government Access Working Group Update April 7, 2009**

Focusing on recommendations in three areas related to government access:

1. Collect and report data pertaining to immigrants or new Americans
2. Develop and monitor state and county agencies' cultural and linguistic competencies
3. Reach out and disseminate public information to immigrant communities
4. Develop infrastructure to support the above

### **Collect and report data pertaining to immigrant and New American needs and use of public resources**

- For new Americans receiving public benefits and services, collect data on: primary language spoken at home, level of English language proficiency, race and ethnicity, country of birth of service recipients, and country of birth of service recipients' parents
- For state and county agencies, collect data on: number of bilingual staff, vital documents translated, and employees who went through cultural and linguistic competency training
- Data should be integrated into the StateStat and reported monthly by each agency in their respective StateStat sessions with the Governor's staff, and posted on each agency's website

Rationale: Two key demographic variables associated with immigrants are not collected and overlooked: language ability and country of birth, which help distinguish immigrants from similar geographic regions and avoid broad generalizations based on the limited race and ethnicity categories currently used by the U.S. Census. Monitoring of agencies' compliance with the federal LEP policy also is needed to ensure immigrants' access to information. Public dissemination of information will demonstrate how the data are used and reported, alleviating fears of misuse among immigrants.

### **Develop and monitor agencies' cultural and linguistic competencies**

- Determine standard definition of LEP and format for LEP plans for state and county agencies
- Develop and monitor implementation of LEP plans
- Conduct regular and random compliance review

Rationale: Monitoring of agencies' LEP plans will uncover which agencies need technical assistance to increase immigrants' access to government.

### **Reach out and disseminate public information through an organized cross-sector network**

- Develop and co-locate "welcome centers" in immigrant organizations throughout the state
- Create mobile "welcome vans"
- Create partnerships with local ethnic media, places of worship, ethnic grocery stores and restaurants, and community colleges to distribute information

### **Develop infrastructure to support the above**

- Designate person(s) to coordinate immigrant integration efforts across systems and agencies and to ensure compliance at the state level
- Designate a person to fulfill the same function in each county
- Designate a point person at each welcome center to communicate with the above persons